

***Rubus nigerrimus* (Greene) Rydb.**  
northwest raspberry  
Rosaceae (Rose Family)

**Status:** State Endangered, USFWS Species of Concern  
**Rank:** G1S1

**General Description:** Shrubby perennial up to about 6 feet tall. The stems are fairly densely armed with straight or hooked prickles, some of which are strongly flattened. The leaves are compound with toothed margins and essentially glabrous on both surfaces. The leaves on flowering stems are in groups of three and the petioles are armed with prickles. On first year stems the leaves are often in groups of five with the lower two lacking petioles. The flowers are white and loosely clustered at the ends of the branches. The fruit is a moderately succulent, blackish, raspberry-like, glabrous drupelet.

**Identification Tips:** *R. nigerrimus* is very similar to *R. leucodermis*, which occupies the same geographic area. The former can be distinguished most readily by its leaves, which are glabrous on both surfaces, rather than pubescent on the underside.

**Phenology:** Blooms in May and early June. Fruits begin to ripen in late June. By mid-July most fruits are mature or overmature.

**Range:** Local endemic, restricted to an area approximately 20 by 4 miles along the Snake River in Whitman and Garfield cos., WA in the Columbia Basin physiographic province.

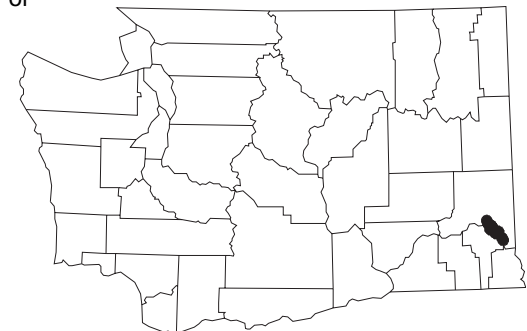
**Habitat:** Occurs primarily along the bottom of steep, narrow drainages and somewhat moist areas on adjacent slopes on tributaries to the Snake River in the bluebunch wheatgrass/ Sandberg's bluegrass association of Daubenmire (1970). Soils are generally derived from loess, volcanic ash, and weathered basalt. The associated vegetation typically consists of other shrubs, forbs, and grasses, with an occasional hardwood over-story component. Associated species include Lewis's mockorange (*Philadelphus lewisii*), Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus discolor*), whitebark raspberry (*Rubus leucodermis*), smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra*), willow (*Salix* sp.), Wood's rose (*Rosa woodsii*), black cottonwood (*Populus tricocarpa*), black hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*), oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*), and stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*). Elevation: 700-2200 feet.

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Known distribution of  
*Rubus nigerrimus*  
in Washington



● Current (1980+)  
○ Historic (older than 1980)

## ***Rubus nigerrimus***

northwest raspberry



John Gamon



Phyllis Baxter

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**Ecology:** The species primarily occurs in habitats that are seasonally moist, but which dry out by late spring or early summer. Some sites are subject to occasional torrents of water, as evidenced by the sparse vegetation and scoured nature of the habitat. *R. discolor* and *R. leucodermis* are present at several sites and are probably direct competitors. *Rubus ursinus* is also present at at least one site. All known sites have been significantly altered from their original conditions, grazing being one of the primary causes. Although not well documented, birds and other animals probably assist in seed dispersal.

**State Status Comments:** The species has a very small range and there are few occurrences, most of which are quite small. There has been a decline in habitat (damming of the Snake River, grazing practices, etc.) and there are ongoing threats (grazing, competition with weedy species).

**Inventory Needs:** The species has been the subject of systematic inventory efforts. However, the somewhat remote and rugged nature of the habitat has made thorough inventories of individual drainages difficult. Additional inventory work should be conducted, particularly upstream from Lower Granite Dam on the Garfield Co. side of the Snake River.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** Most, if not all, of the potential habitat for *R. nigerrimus* has been significantly altered by construction of dams along the Snake River and subsequent inundation, grazing, and road and railroad construction and maintenance. Heavy use has resulted in a number of non-native species being present, including aggressive weedy species and horticultural escapees. Herbicide applications have also had localized negative effects. The primary focus of habitat management should be recovery of riparian areas, particularly from the effects of grazing.

### **References:**

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1961. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 3: Saxifragaceae to Ericaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 614 pp.